



**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS**

**Draft  
Environmental Assessment**

**NorthWestern Energy Easement for  
Underground Powerline Installation**

**8/21/2020**



# Draft Environmental Assessment CHECKLIST

## **PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION**

1. **Type of proposed state action:** The installation of an underground electrical powerline from an existing transformer located inside Black Sandy State Park, along Hauser Dam Road ROW, to just past the north boundary of the park. The purpose of the powerline will be to provide electricity for an automatic gate which will enhance security at Hauser Dam.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:**  
Section 87-1-209 (4) of the Montana Code Annotated ("MCA") authorizes the Director of Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks ("FWP") to grant or acquire (from willing sellers) pipeline easements when necessary and advisable for the management and use of department property. Consent of the Parks Board or Fish and Wildlife Commission is not required when the value of the interest acquired or conveyed is less than \$20,000. This authority includes the issuance of an easement, which in this case, is valued at approximately \$500.00

3. **Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency)**

NorthWestern Energy  
11 E. Park St.  
Butte, Mt., 59701-1711

4. **Anticipated Schedule:**  
Estimated Construction Commencement Date: Fall 2020  
Estimated Completion Date: Fall 2020  
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): N/A

5. **Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township):**

Section 05 Township 11 North Range 02 West

6. **Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:			(d) Floodplain
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>		(e) Productive:
(existing shop area)			Irrigated cropland
(b) Open Space/	<u>.25</u>		Dry cropland
Woodlands/Recreation			Forestry
			<u>0</u>

(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>0</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

**8. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.**

**(a) Permits:** permits will be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permits</u>
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No permitting required

**(b) Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
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No state funding

**(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
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None

**9. Narrative summary of the proposed action.**

NorthWestern Energy seeks to attain an easement from Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks to bore an underground powerline from a transformer located in Black Sandy State Park to the Hauser Dam Road ROW to supply electricity to an automatic gate located at the end of the Hauser Dam Road.

**10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:**

**Alternative A: No Action.** Security for Hauser Dam Complex will be compromised

**Alternative B: Proposed Action.** Security for Hauser Dam Complex will be improved

**11. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**

N/A

## **PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST**

**Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.**

### **A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture				x		
2. Air quality or objectionable odors				x		
3. Water quality, quantity and distribution (surface or groundwater)				x		
4. Existing water right or reservation				x		
5. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality			X			A5.
6. Unique, endangered, or fragile vegetative species				x		
6. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				x		
7. Unique, endangered, or fragile wildlife or fisheries species				x		
8. Introduction of new species into an area				x		
9. Changes to abundance or movement of species				x		

A5. Minor ground disturbance

## B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Noise and/or electrical effects			X			B1
2. Land use			X			B2
3. Risk and/or health hazards				x		
4. Community impact				x		
5. Public services/taxes/utilities				x		
6. Potential revenue and/or project maintenance costs				x		
7. Aesthetics and recreation				x		
8. Cultural and historic resources				x		
9. Evaluation of significance				x		
10. Generate public controversy				x		

**B1.** There will be minor noise disturbance during project

**B2.** A small portion of Black Sandy State Park property will be temporarily utilized for this project

### **PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

The proposed action alternative will result in very little disturbance to the physical or human environment in Black Sandy Park. The boring process is a one-time disturbance that will last several days at the most. Replacement or repair of the electric line is permitted under the terms of the proposed easement but is unlikely. Thus, impacts are of a short duration and unlikely to recur with any frequency.

### **PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**1. Public involvement:**

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This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

### **PART V. EA PREPARATION**

**1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)? If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.**

No. The Proposed action alternative will result in very little ground or human disturbance and any disturbance will be of short duration and unlikely to recur.

**2. Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:**

Craig Putchat, Park Manager FWP/ John Taillie Region 4 Park Manager

**3. List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:**

MT. FWP, Black Sandy State Park, Region 4 FWP HQ, Lands Division. NorthWestern Energy